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### The Spiritual Power of the M. E. Church.

BY REV. J. O. A. CLARK, D.D., LL.D., OF SAVANNAH, GA.

BALTIMORE, July 26, 1875.

DEAR ADVOCATE: Round Lake, the seat of the late Fraternal Camp-Meeting, is in New York State, about ten miles from Saratoga. The beauty and variety of its trees, its cottages, its tents, its walks, its placid lake, its bracing air, and its railroad facilities make it a most delightful summer resort.

The meeting was attended by thousands. There were representatives from Canada and many of the States. Among these were six Bishops from the M. E. Church, one from the Church, South, two from the Church, South (colored), one from the Zion, one from the African Church, and many distinguished preachers and laymen.

I was particularly impressed by the number and variety of the meetings, often several, in the interval of preaching, going on the same hour. But whatever their object, there was one central idea governing them all. One theme above all others was prominent—holiness to the Lord. That was the burden of the preaching, the exhortations, the praying, the experience meetings, the love-feasts, and the songs.

This camp-meeting was emphatically a meeting of the saints. In an audience of thousands very few presented themselves as seekers of religion. The great majority of those who asked an interest in prayer were those who were seeking to be made perfect in love. It was to me a mystery that, in such a multitude, where the Holy Ghost was present in power, so few sinners asked the prayers of the Church. But the mystery was explained when they were asked to rise who could testify to their acceptance with God. Then the vast throng would rise to their feet, and stand up apparently as one man, witnesses for Jesus. These camp-meetings are not great awakenings as at the South, but seasons of refreshing, of comfort, and edification to believers. Nor are back-sliders in heart and life many—the great majority, both preachers and laity, being those professing holiness.

I do not mean that all professing holiness have the same ideas of it. For I find here differences of opinion touching this grace, just as there are diversities of gifts, differences of administration, and diversities of operations. But, whatever the name by which it is called—whether holiness, sanctification, consecration, perfect love, or the higher life—all agree that it is crucifixion with Christ—deadness to the world—to be alive to God—a life hid with Christ in God. And no matter what the present attainments, all agree in pressing on to something nobler and higher still, believing that there is no limit, even in this life, to the capabilities of a soul all athirst for Christ—for the living God.

The M. E. Church, I am persuaded, has been instrumental in saving more souls than any other, and is, therefore, the most effective spiritual force on this continent. Her influence here is powerfully felt in all her sister evangelical churches. She calls to the higher life, and leads the way. Hence, at her great camp-meetings are found many preachers and laymen, besides those of her own communion, emulously but lovingly pressing on to

know more and more the love of Christ. Her spiritual power is widest and greatest here, because, more than any other Church at the North, she stresses the Wesleyan and Bible truth that Jesus is able also, even in this life, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

I have asked myself the secret of the tremendous spiritual power this Church is wielding. Her great numbers, her great wealth, her great institutions of learning, her great publishing houses, her great Church organs, and her great preachers—all these combined do not answer the whole question. There are other churches which equal, if they do not excel, her in one or more of these regards. Besides, too, we know it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. And we might ask, how came she to have all these things? How has she grown to such proportions that she is the peer of the foremost? To give these things as the secret of her spiritual force, would be begging the question to which we are seeking the answer.

Passing by her articles of faith, which we believe most conformable to the Holy Scriptures, her usages with their class-meetings and love-feasts, her itinerancy with its clerical and lay-preaching which we believe is the most effective ministry on earth, her unity, zeal, liberality, consecration, devotedness to Christ, love to souls, and special mission to the poor—passing all these by, to all of which the M. E. Church, South, has equal claims, we proceed to mention certain things, which, if they do not fully answer the question, are very important factors in the spiritual force of the M. E. Church.

We instance, first, the wisdom of this Church in her dealings with fanatics—with those who, while they hold to her articles, usages and itinerancy, yet run to excess of zeal in sentiment or practice. Instead of proscribing them, cutting them off from her communion, and driving them into antagonism, she seeks to control and utilize the tremendous impulsive force which fanatic zeal possesses. And this she often does at the expense of being misunderstood—of having ascribed to herself the excesses of the more fanatical of her followers—of being sometimes swept along by a tide too strong for her control. But yet the great heart of the Church is conservative; and sooner or later this conservative power asserts and maintains its supremacy. As the great Catholic Church utilized the fiery zeal of Loyola, so does the great Methodist Episcopal Church not only utilize the intemperate zeal of the fanatics in her communion, but in the end she modifies, tempers and brings it within appointed bounds. The untamed and fiery steed of the wild prairie, by kindness, by gentleness, and by patience, is often made obedient to bit and bridle. Life and pluck, in taming, are not rudely crushed out of the spirited animal, converting him into a dull and sluggish pack-horse, or dray-horse. The Church's aim is to preserve these vital forces and so temper and direct them that a useful and ready obedience may not be had at their expense. The mission of this great Church is not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The ambitious and fiery spirit of some youthful John who wishes to call down fire from heaven upon the men who do not listen to his preaching; the self-confidence of some presumptuous Peter who claims for himself greater boldness in the service of his Master than is possessed by his fellow disciples, and the impetuous zeal of some unconverted Saul, are not crushed out by violence, but modified, tempered, and utilized by the patient discipline of forbearance and love.

We instance next the use to which this Church has put woman. The woman-power of the M. E. Church is a tremendously vitalizing force. This force is gentle, winning, harmonizing, refining, but none the less subtle and powerful for all that. Its effect upon the ruder nature of man is unmistakably traced. For the man-power in the Church is greatly meliorated and toned down by the infusion of gentleness which woman has thrown into it.

The most casual observer must notice the greater softness and gentleness of the Church of to-day compared with that of the past. This is mainly due to the influence of woman. Her loving spirit, as the dew on Hermon, infuses itself into all the services of the Church, and refreshes

all on whom it falls. She knows her place in this great Church, nor does she usurp authority. Her mission is a subordinate one, and she cheerfully accepts it. Placed under authority and readily submitting to it, she devotes all her consecrated powers to the work of doing good, and labors when and where the constituted authorities direct. The number of holy and gifted women in the M. E. Church is truly astounding. The persuasive gifts of song, of prayer and of exhortation pre-eminently abound; and in all the sweet ministries of life—in works of beneficence and charity—they far excel the most highly gifted of the other sex.

But it is in the Foreign Mission field, and especially in the great Oriental nations, the woman-power of the Church will be peculiarly felt for good. There woman is degraded far below the level of man, and scarcely rises above the level of the brute. To elevate her, to raise woman to her true rank and dignity in the scale of humanity, is peculiar to the Gospel of Christ. The degraded women of heathenism, of Buddhism and Mohammedanism our male missionaries cannot reach, but they can be reached through woman. Hence the women of the Church here are appropriating this field to themselves and preparing to enter it more fully. To preach deliverance to their degraded sisters of the East—to rescue them from the harem of sensual delights, and raise them to the full dignity of Christian and wifely womanhood, is the great mission to which many loving women here have consecrated themselves.

We purposed to notice particularly—but cannot—the praying-power, the singing-power, the exhorting-power, and what we may appropriately call the *lung*-power of the Church. Do not smile at the last named, for I assure you that when it is combined with the praying, the singing or the exhorting power, it becomes a mighty force. These Methodist know how to use the human voice. Frequent camp-meetings and constant open-air practice give to their voices a wonderful compass. They can preach and exhort and pray and sing, and that too without apparent effort. They seem never to tire—never to grow hoarse. Nowhere, perhaps, can men and women be found more gifted in exhortation, in prayer, and in song. There were brethren at Round Lake who can sing through a camp-meeting of two weeks and never flag. Some one at Round Lake asked, in my presence, a good brother Rose, who is specially gifted in song, why he was not leading the singing. To this he replied that he was saving himself for the "Thousand Islands"—a camp-ground in northern New York. I have thought that if any one could literally sing through a thousand islands, there were others at Round Lake besides Bro. Rose who were able to do it.

I cannot close this communication without honestly expressing what I believe to be the present sentiments of the liberal Northern Methodists. I am assured that they are tired of strife and long for peace. They tell us, now that slavery is gone, that they have no controversy with us, and are anxious to take us to their hearts. No man from the South can come here and not feel this. What Bishops Kavanaugh and Doggett, what Drs. Poisal and Lee and Sargent and McFerrin experienced others will experience if they come here and mingle with this people. Their hearts are open to us. There are extreme men, as there are with us. But the great majority of the Bishops, the preachers and the laity are conservative—love us—and wish to see us one in heart with themselves. I am sure that if the five Bishops I met at Round Lake could meet an equal number of Southern Bishops whom I could name the question of fraternity, if left to them, could be settled in ten minutes. And this I say because these Bishops have the sense and grace to know that the dead past ought to bury its dead.

Of one thing I am confident—the power of extreme men, North and South, is broken—their occupation gone. The great heart of both Churches is gravitating to unity. No man can prevent this, North or South. If there must be division, the peace makers, North and South, will come together and leave the doughty warriors, whose "voice is still for war," to make, if they please, a Kilkenny cat-fight of it between themselves. And whatever

may be the future of the two so called Methodisms, there are thousands of good and true men, North and South, who are determined, so far as themselves are concerned, that the reign of hate shall cease—that the voice of peace, of gentleness, and of love shall be heard.

The cause of the Wesleyan Monumental Church is advancing finely—the interest felt in it is deep and widening. God grant that it may be the key-stone in the great arch of Wesleyan Methodism the world over!

Last week at Chester Heights Camp-meeting, Penn., I had a good time, and met with practical fraternity; and yet Chester Heights was not a fraternal camp-meeting—not even a national one, but a purely local one. Its resolutions in behalf of the Monumental Church did much credit to the hearts of the brethren there. At Chester Heights, as at Round Lake, I heard not a word that could give offense to the most sensitive Southern ear. God of our fathers—God of Wesley and Asbury, of Soule and Hedding, of Andrew and Morris, hasten, oh! hasten the day when all the inflammable rhetoric drawn from the late conflict of arms between brethren shall be banished forever from the pulpit, the platform and the press—when it shall so burn itself out that never afterward shall the malignant breath of genius, however gifted, be able to kindle a single spark from its charred and blackened remains!

It may be thought that what has been written would have greater weight were the writer not acting for the Monumental Church. It may also be thought presumption in him to write about these matters at all. He answers, that dear as is that Church to him—happy as he would be to see erected, in his native city, the scene of Wesley's earliest ministerial labors, a monument worthy of the great Founder of Methodism, there is something dearer to the writer by far: The return of good fellowship—the end of all strife—peace upon an enduring basis—oneness of heart in all the Wesleyan family. No matter then what may be said, North or South, of the writer or his motives, he has a sweet consciousness of sincerity and an abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of the grace of God over all prejudices and passion and hate. Nor, though little and unknown, is it presumption to have written what he has, for he has but performed, in the best way he knows, a duty growing out of his relation to the Church in Savannah—a relation created by the choice of his brethren there. He knows that they would not have sent him North to ask aid for a Monument to Wesley, nor would he have stultified himself by undertaking it, had not both they and he meant that the Monumental Church should be a lasting pledge of sympathy and love. It is the olive branch of peace which Savannah Methodists hold out to the Methodists of all the earth—to the Church, North and South—to the Methodists of the Canadas, and to the Wesleyans of Great Britain and Ireland. Who, then, is more entitled to speak than the bearer of this branch to the Churches of the great Wesleyan family? Wherefore, if he can aid his brethren of Savannah to build this church, and, what is far more important, contribute something to the restoration of harmony, he will feel that his poor prayers have been answered and that he has not labored in vain.

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### NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The new Constitution for this State has been framed, published, sent before the people, and they have had the opportunity to examine its provisions. We have examined it with some care, and do not hesitate to pronounce it worthy of the convention which framed it, and worthy of acceptance by the people for whom it was intended. It is not absolutely perfect. On the contrary, it contains some provisions which we would prefer were not there, but it is so far superior to the bungling, ill-digested, ill arranged, one-sided, unfair thing that was conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, and born out of due time, and now called the Constitution, that we do not see how honest men can hesitate as to a choice between them.

It is true this paper is devoted mainly to religious subjects, but it is also true

that its editor and its readers are citizens in common with others, and Methodist people *ought to be* among the very best of citizens—industrious, frugal, economical, law abiding, order-loving, exemplary citizens. As citizens they have rights to be protected and duties to be performed. It cannot be a matter of indifference to them what sort of a Constitution is framed for and accepted by the State they live in. We have for some years been living under a Constitution that was the offspring of bitter partisanship, and one which, as we verily believe, was never adopted by the vote of a majority of even those who were then permitted to vote. It was foisted upon us by means that were not at all creditable to those concerned. But we have had it, such as it is, and must continue to live under it for years yet to come unless we adopt and ratify the work of the late Constitutional Convention. One or the other we are forced to do. Let it be the latter—let the new Constitution be adopted by a majority that will be nearly or quite equivalent to unanimity, because—1. Nearly all the expense necessary has already been incurred. 2. It is far better than that we now have. 3. There is, so far as we can judge, no partisanship or special favoritism in it. 4. It provides against the recurrence of many wrongs, impositions and frauds that have been practiced and might again be practiced under the one we now have. 5. It provides against onerous taxation and the incurring of heavy public debts except by the consent of all the people. 6. Its provisions, if carried out, would secure a much more economical, less expensive and yet more effective State government than we have at present. 7. It is the production of a body of men chosen by the people, and who gave all the points careful and patient consideration, and then finally adopted the whole by entire unanimity—not a dissenting voice, thus indicating that in the opinion of those whose attention had been solely and so closely called to the subject this was the best which could be done under existing circumstances. There are some formidable obstructions thrown in the way of reckless and unscrupulous speculation and special legislation that we like much. We advise all good citizens to examine it with care, compare it with the Constitution we now have, and then conscientiously act according to the best judgment they can form. The voting for or against ratification will be on the 30th of October next, and if ratified the new Constitution will go into effect November 30th. Let us try it. That is about all we care to say on the subject.

Not long since General Gordon, United States Senator from Georgia, delivered a speech in Alabama, in which he declared that the whites and blacks of the South could and would live together in peace but for the interference of extremists. He then told the colored men to be deceived no longer, and said: "You have had Democratic rule here in Alabama, and they have robbed you of none of your rights. Here the interests of the white man and the colored man are identical; a good government for the one is a good government for the other; the same sun shines above the black man and the white man, and the genial showers water alike the soil of the one and the other; the same God rules above them both, and they could live together in peace but for the Radicals who antagonize the races. He called upon them to pause, consider and be free men, and to suffer themselves to be no longer marched to the polls as dumb-driven cattle to the slaughter; for the time ignorance and vice may hold sway, but as certainly as that God reigns and rules the earth truth will ultimately triumph and intelligence reign, not to the injury of the colored man, but for the common weal of all; and here alone is safety for the colored man. He said that as an excuse for the perpetration of many of the outrages which had been heaped upon the people of the South the Radicals gave out that we were disloyal—and pray, disloyal to what? To the Radical party!—to wrong and oppression—to corruption in high places—to robbery and plunder! Aye, to be loyal now, one must not only believe Grant to be a statesman and Beast Butler an honest man, but that Henry Ward Beecher is an innocent, persecuted saint!" This was pretty plain talk, nevertheless contains some whole-some truth.

The effects of the storms of wind, rains and floods have been so extensive, so widely spread and so disastrous as that we need not attempt anything like an accurate description of them in this paper. So far as this country is concerned, the principal storms seem to have been in a belt of country about 200 miles wide, but destructive almost beyond precedent. Perhaps the greatest loss has been caused by the overflows, and that not so much of the larger as of the smaller rivers and creeks. In reference to the Mississippi river at this point, one of our city dailies gave us the following in last Wednesday's issue: "The present remarkable high-stage of the river recalls to memory past years, when the flood also reached respectable proportions. The year 1785 was known, in old French parlance, as *'l'annee des grands eaux'*, while in 1811, and again in 1826, the summer rise was very high, but no measurements were made, and the exact rise cannot therefore be given. Authentic records of Mississippi river floods begin in 1844, when the river rose 39 feet 7 inches above low-water mark. In 1851, the rise was 37 feet 2 inches; in 1858, 35 feet 4 inches; and in 1862, it was 32 feet 9 inches above low-water mark. In all the above years of flood water, the rise was at its highest point early in June, and in 1844 the day of the highest water mark was June 24. This summer the river began rising about the middle of June, and on July 24 was 28 feet 4 inches above low-water mark. It then fell about 6 feet, but on Friday last it again turned and continued rapidly rising until 8 o'clock yesterday morning, when it became stationary at 29 feet 9 inches above low-water mark. This is higher than was ever known in the month of August."

The people of Alabama have determined by a majority of from 15,000 to 20,000 to hold a convention for revising their State Constitution.

The North Carolina people voted for delegates to their Constitutional Convention on Thursday last. We have not learned the result.

Quite a sensation has been caused in England, Ireland and to some extent in Germany as well, by the action of the Lord Mayor of Dublin in regard to the O'Connell centennial celebration. It is stated that under the manipulations of Cardinal Cullen and other ecclesiastical dignitaries an effort was made to give an Ultramontane character to the whole proceedings, and cause them to be so conducted that Protestants, Liberals and Fenians could not consistently participate; and as those proceedings were likely to be of such a character as to give to Germany just cause for complaint, in that sympathy must be expressed for the imprisoned German Bishops, the leading men of England expressed their willingness to join in a proper celebration of the memory of O'Connell as a statesman, as a friend to civil liberty, and as one who did much in the service of his country, but not as a religionist, especially on the Ultramontane principles. Yet a large portion of the Irish people are firm in sustaining the action of the Mayor, and serious difficulties may grow out of the present State of affairs. The English press, generally, is opposed to the course of the Lord Mayor, and it is maintained that under the management of Cullen, Manning and other astute Catholics the real object is to make trouble with Germany. This is the light too in which the Germans seem to regard the matter, and not one of the German burgomasters replied to the invitation of the Dublin Mayor asking the civil magistrates of the empire to be present at the banquet which was recently given by the English municipality in Guild Hall. In this, it is believed, the burgomasters acted under the direction of Bismarck. Still the celebration, according to the last accounts, had gone on agreeably to the Mayor's programme without disturbance. But at this writing we have not full particulars.

The celebrated Hans Christian Andersen died last week at Copenhagen.

More heavy failures have been reported in England.

The Chinese have again been making assaults on foreigners. The last was on the attaché of the German legation, who with his companions was severely beaten while on a scientific excursion forty miles from the capital.

Japan, it is said, is likely to get into a war with Corea.

Many buildings and much of other property have been destroyed by floods in India.